

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 5, 9-13 and 20-21 are presently active in this case, Claims 1-3 and 5 having been amended, Claims 4, 6-8 and 14-19 canceled, and Claims 20-21 added by the present Amendment.

In the outstanding Official Action Claim 1 was rejected under 35 USC §102(a) as being anticipated by Osakabe et al (2002/0003615) and under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Magome (6,160,619); Claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16 and 18 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Murakami et al (5,920,378); and Claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Takahashi (2002/0037460).

In light of the several grounds for rejection, Claims 1 and 5 have been amended to clarify the claimed invention and thereby to more clearly patentably define over the cited art. No new matter has been added.

Turning now to the applied prior art, with regard to Claims 1-3, 5, 20 and 21, none of the cited references discloses:

- (1) a stage unit comprising two stages, a first stage and a second stage,
- (2) arranging a first fiducial mark and a second fiducial mark on each of the first and second stages, and
- (3) arranging the first fiducial mark and the second fiducial mark on different fiducial mark plates on the respective stages.

Magome (USP6,160,619) discloses, as shown in Fig. 5, a structure comprising only one stage, a XY-stage 20. On the XY-stage 20, one reference plate FPl is arranged. As shown in Fig. 6, all of a plurality of marks are arranged on the reference plate in Magome.

Similarly, Qsakabe (US200210003615 merely discloses one substrate stage 11, only one reference mark plate 12 on the substrate stage 11, and a first reference mark 13 and a second reference mark 14 both arranged on the reference mark plate 12.

Murakami discloses two fiducial members FPa and FPb arranged on a plate stage 31. On the fiducial members FPa and FPb, fiducial marks FMa and FMb are respectively arranged. However, similar to the other cited references, Murakami discloses one stage only, i.e. the plate stage 31, and does not disclose a structure comprising a plurality of stages. As described at page 3, lines 6-10 of Applicants' specification, a structure comprising a plurality of stages requires a larger moving range for the stages. Since Murakami does not disclose a structure comprising a plurality of stages as stated above, Applicants consider that absent hindsight, it is not possible to derive the claimed structure from the disclosure of Murakami.

Takahashi similarly does not describe first and second plates provided on first and second stages, but instead at most appears to disclose a single stage WST having plural fiducial marks. Furthermore, the August 2, 2001 filing date of Takahashi is later than the earliest priority date of the present application, November 29, 2000, and thus Takahashi can be removed from consideration as prior art under 35 USC § 102(e) upon Applicants filing of a certified translation of Applicants' priority application. Applicants

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reserve the right to do so pending the Examiner's reconsideration of the newly present claims
in light of Takahashi.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion,
the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable
action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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